

# CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE



Hazel Dawn in  
"Up in Mabel's Room."



Dorothy  
Dickson  
in the  
Morris  
Gest  
Century  
"Midnight  
Whirl"  
PHOTO BY  
ALFRED CHENEY  
LORDS-ON



Billie Wagner  
in  
"Gazettes  
of 1919"



Gertrude  
Vanderbilt  
in  
"Listen  
Lester!"  
PHOTO BY  
GEISLER &  
ANDREWS



Irene Mathews in  
"The Greenwich Village Nights."

## Sad-Eyed Men and Their Place in Comedy

By Heywood Brown

The fact that sad-eyed men are often the best low comedians is generally recognized. Everybody who has ever seen Lew Fields appreciates this, and the same glint of pathos is evident in the most boisterous antics of Charlie Chaplin. But the talent for creating this useful background for farce is often misunderstood. So many people commented on the infinite sadness with which Lew choked Joe Weber that a tradition arose that Fields could duplicate the success of David Warfield in serious roles. The experiment failed. The actor was unable to develop the quality, which he used merely to heighten comic effects, into the foreground of a characterization. He was able to hint at things which he could not express more fully.

Probably the same thing is true of Charlie Chaplin, although many who have observed the poignantly tragic nature of his smile have suggested that he ought to play Hamlet or Poe, or some character who never threw ples or received them. We suppose he would not succeed, though we don't know just why. Certainly nobody can put so much intensity into a scene as Chaplin or Fields unless it is Eddie Cantor. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that the expression of the deepest emotions requires a restraint which is not familiar to these men. In other words, low comedy, to be successful, must be more intense than serious roles—more emotional, if you like. Less can be done by suggestion. There is smaller scope for ellipsis. Thus, while most of the truly great performances in the theatre are in serious roles, it is easier to do a serious rôle acceptably than a comic one.

All the experience of the Washington Square Players, the Provincetown Players and the Theatre Guild seems to support this. The Washington Square Players never acted half so well in any of their farces as they did in "Trifles" or "Bushman," which were intensely serious. Likewise "Cocaine" marked the highest point in the playing achievements of the Provincetowners in the last few seasons. The Theatre Guild this season chose Benavente's light romantic comedy, "The Bonds of Interest," in preference to St. John Ervine's tragic "John Ferguson," because they felt that they were more likely to be effective in comedy than in tragedy. But as a matter of fact when it came to the playing the organization was almost all at sea in handling the light rôles and did enormously well with the heavier play. Tragedy, perhaps, lies more within the experience of the average young actor than farce.

and makes, therefore, a smaller demand on his creative instinct.

George Jean Nathan, in an interesting article in the current "Century," names Arthur Hopkins and Florenz Ziegfeld as the two active producing managers who have done most for the American theatre in the season just closed.

"With Ziegfeld," writes Nathan, "the unduly dismissed Ziegfeld, who has brought to the American stage the greatest music show richness and beauty that the modern music-show stage knows, Hopkins has brought consistently to the American stage the only new flash of genuinely enduring grace and beauty that it in turn has known in the last decade."

We don't remember that Ziegfeld has suffered much from critical neglect in the New York newspapers, at any rate. Several seasons ago Louis Sherwin began pounding on the theme that the one achievement of our theatre which was distinctly native and distinctly well done was any current "Midnight Frolic" in the series of Ziegfeld. There seems to be no room to dispute the fact that Ziegfeld has brought a new standard of beauty in setting to the musical comedy stage, but he has not done as well for the ears as for the eyes. The music of his shows has never been beyond the American musical comedy average, and, although he has presented such amusing comedians as Will Rogers and Eddie Cantor, Ziegfeld has not raised the popular taste in librettos.

From the standpoint of the theatre artist all these Frolics and Follies are magnificently planned. They are lofty in idea as well as in execution, but the preparation of the spoken and singing fillings seems to be much more haphazard. They are surprisingly successful, even in these respects, often enough, but until Ziegfeld has bestowed the same care and taste on the librettos of his pieces as he does on the settings he does not deserve hand-springs from all the critics. It is true that he may justly assert that his shows are at least as well written as, possibly better than, those of any of his rivals, but the boast at present is not sweeping.

### Vaudeville

PALACE—Jack Norworth heads the holiday bill. The Overseas Revue, in which Elizabeth Brice and May Boley are featured, remains for a second week. The supporting bill includes the Ford Sisters, Joe Laurie and Arleen Bronson, the Dixie Duo, Ames and Winthrop and the Le Volos.

RIVERSIDE—The Four Marx Brothers share the top of the bill with Ruth Royce. Ernest Evans and Florence Tempest, Miss Norton and Paul Nicholson, Harry Master and Jack



Louis Mann in  
"A Friendly Stranger"

Kraft, the Apollo Trio and "Topics of the Day" complete the bill.

ROYAL—A miniature musical production, "Kiss Me," heads the bill. Other features of the bill are Eva Shirley and company, Andrew Mack, Sybil Vane, Jimmy Lucas and company, Paul Decker and company, Jack Patton and Loretta Marks, the Three Daring Sisters and "Topics of the Day."

LOEW'S AMERICAN—Jack C. Clair and Jack Kuhn in the musical production "Just a Girl" will headline the vaudeville programme the first half of the week. Alice Brady in "Red Head" is the picture attraction. Bert Lamont and his cowboys head the programme the last part of the week. Olive Thomas, in "Upstairs and Down," is the picture feature.

NEW BRIGHTON THEATRE—The special features of the week's bill are George Whiting and Sadie Burt, Maud Lambert and Ernest Ball and Pearl Regay and Lester Sheehan. A tabloid musical comedy entitled "Not Yet, Marie," is a special feature. William Edmonds and Marie Donahue head the cast. Others on the bill are Bert Baker in a sketch called "Pre-variation" and Martelle, female impersonator.

### Actors' Equity Association Replies to Amelia Bingham

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: In her criticisms of the Actors' Equity Association, Miss Amelia Bingham makes one important misstatement which, having been repeated in your issue of Sunday, should be corrected.

Miss Bingham says that the association is "getting altogether too personal when it asks of its members the amount of their salaries." Such a question has never been put by us, except when our attorneys have been requested to start an action.

In order to protect our people from managers who try to postpone indefinitely the giving of an "Equity" contract, for no other reason but to avoid its terms, we do ask for replies, during the first week of rehearsals, to the following questions on the enclosed postcard:

1. Date of first rehearsals?
2. Have you received an "Equity" contract signed by the management?
3. Name of play?
4. Name of management?

Miss Bingham must indeed be sensitive if she finds the above of too personal a nature; but, anyway, she will be glad to learn that the above inquiries have been the means of securing favorable conditions of employment to many of her less fortunate brothers and sisters. Yours very truly,  
FRANK GILLMORE,  
Executive Secretary.

## The Trying Process Of Trying-Out

By Rebecca Drucker

Atlantic City is the great proving ground for American plays. During war time Washington, with its huge amusement-seeking transient population, ran it a close second. A small and regular number are tried out on Baltimore, New Haven, Trenton and other outlying sections, but none of them compete with Atlantic City. Managers make theatre reservations here a year ahead, even when they have no play in contemplation for trying out. This is partly due to the fact that Atlantic City audiences, being gathered from many parts of the country, form a type of audience closer to that of New York than can be found anywhere else. And also because Atlantic City, having come to pride itself on its connoisseurship, assures a well filled house to any sort of play.

A tryout has little value to a manager as an indication of the success the play will have in New York. The verdict of Baltimore, Washington or Atlantic City is easily reversed by New York. The tryout serves merely as a working demonstration of the play. The difference between a script and a production is frequently startling. Any one of a dozen unexpected obstacles lie between. No matter how smoothly written the play is, a visual demonstration will bring out startling differences between the reading of a play and the playing. Scenes that crackle on paper drag in production. Stage directions written down are insufficient or clumsy. A three-act play that has gone through four weeks of rehearsal is suddenly found on opening night to take only an hour and a half of playing time instead of the usual two and a half hours. It needs to be bolstered up with incident. Or the demonstration proves a leading player unsuited to the part. Or it proves itself no play at all.

Disappointed playwrights have long had no reticence about making known the fact that more plays are ruined in tryout than ever reach Broadway. And one is uncertain whether to deny them this consolation, since it is well known that only the most powerful authors can restrain a manager from indulging his passion for tinkering with a play during the trying-out season. The frenzy is dormant in preliminary rehearsals, but reaches its crest in the final week of tryout—when nothing in the play is sacred from the manager's pruning knife. In the final week, when the nerves of the director, author and manager are worn thin and the vitality of the play seems very low, a play doctor is frequently called in to operate. A few of the most successful playwrights in the country form the group which commonly does this rescue work. Among them are George M. Cohan, George V. Hobart, Channing Pollock, Edgar Selwyn, George Broadhurst and Willard Mack. Sometimes their names appear on the programme as collaborators; often they do not. Whether or not the version they make is finally used they share in the royalties.

It is not strange that the anxiety and shiftings of viewpoint attendant on the proving of the piece may finally cause the manager to lose his perspective about his play. He finally casts it to the public very much as a sacrifice to the lions. There are some strange stories of faith lost in plays that afterward made huge successes. The classic example is that of "Within the Law," by Bayard Veiller, which Brady first produced in Chicago. Its

tryout in Chicago was not successful and Brady sold his rights in the play for \$5,000. Some indication of the author's discouragement may be gleaned from the fact that Bayard Veiller, at the same time, sold all his author's rights in the piece for \$5,000. The play made more than half a million dollars. It is said that following the production of "Turn of the Mind" in Atlantic City, the discouragement of the producers, Winchell Smith and John Golden, was profound, and they offered it to any of the managers who came up for the tryout at their own figure. The play opened none too hopefully in New York and immediately scored popularly as have few plays in recent years. "Eyes of Youth" was another play whose existence was in doubt after the tryout. On the day preceding the opening of "Potash and Perlmutter" in Atlantic City, A. H. Woods offered a 25 per cent interest in the play to a fellow manager for \$1,000. It was refused and the opportunity to make a quarter of a million was lost.

But, extraordinary as are the circumstances attendant on legitimate productions, they are not nearly so curious as those connected with the producing of musical comedies.

Musical comedies are created either on a build-as-you-go plan or by a stripping-down process. A well known librettist is inspired by the notion that a good musical piece could be written about a lady with a mole upon her knee. Half a dozen possibilities suggest themselves to him, and he confides them to an open-minded manager, who, being at the slack time of his season, is disposed to experiment. A composer is called in who has an idea for a dance tune in the second act, and the play is on. A cast and chorus are sketchily assembled and the complications of the plot worked out in the course of rehearsals. Half a dozen people are called in to contribute lyrics. The comedian makes up his own lines and business, specialties are interpolated and, gathering volume and impetus as it goes, the piece romps over the lines on opening night. Or take the stripping-down process. "The Lady With the Mole" is submitted completely furnished with a plot, several lyrics and a complete score and goes into rehearsals with a carefully selected cast. In the first week of rehearsal five of the lyrics are thrown out and others written to or-

der. The dance music needs speeding up, and something with more jazz takes its place. There is found to be too much plot, and several of the complications are let out to make room for specialties. On the road six more numbers are thrown out, and in the final try-out the last five are discarded and what is left of the plot is abandoned. The whole cast meanwhile has been metamorphosed into a gay young adventuress. On the opening night nothing of the original plot, score or cast remains but the mole.

The hopes of a manager are not extravagant. Perhaps no more than one play in five that is tried out reaches New York, and if of five plays that he brings to New York one is a really great success he counts the season a successful one. The modern trend toward intimate plays with small casts and simple stage furnishings makes the business of trying out plays much less expensive than one might suppose, and the prizes that fall to the winner are so great that the stakes are comparatively small.

### Dillingham Announces

#### Next Season's Plan

The first of Charles Dillingham's dramatic productions the coming season will be "Cesar's Wife," a comedy drama by William Somerset Maugham that is now having great success at the Royalty Theatre in London. After he has made his annual production at the Hippodrome in August he will present in succession a comic opera, the libretto of which has been written by William Le Baron, and a musical comedy by the author and composer of "She's a Good Fellow"—Anne Caldwell and Jerome Kern. The title of this play will be "Dear Friend Wife." In association with Mr. Erlanger and Mr. Ziegfeld he will present Raymond

### AMUSEMENTS

**RIVERSIDE** (B'way)  
B. F. KEITH'S  
Concerts Sunday, 2:15 & 8:15. Week of June 30.  
**4 MARX BROS. & CO.**  
"N. Everything."  
Written by Al Shean.  
**GEORGE AUSTIN MOORE**  
Apollo Trio  
**Ernest Evans & Girls**  
**RUTH ROYE**  
"The Girl of the Year."  
Music by J. S. Gershwin.  
**FLORENCE TEMPEST**  
Masters & Kraft  
**Norton & Nicholson**  
SURF BATHING NOW OPEN

### AMUSEMENTS

**PALACE**  
B'way & 47th St.  
BROADWAY AND 47th STREET  
TWO BIG CONCERTS SUNDAY, 2 & 8 P. M. BEGINNING MONDAY, JUNE 30.  
24 Big Bands—Will Morriway, Inc. presents  
**ELIZABETH BRICE**  
IN THE  
"OVERSEAS REVUE"  
With MAY BOLEY  
also  
**CLARENCE NORDSTROM**  
and Broadway Cast of 20  
ENGAGEMENT DE LUXE  
**JACK NORWORTH**  
IN  
NEW SONGS  
**MABEL FORD SISTERS DORA**  
In "The Ford Dancing Revue of 1919"  
EXTRA ADDED FEATURE  
**AMES & WINTHROP** Adelaide  
In "One Moment, Please!"  
A Thimble of Revue  
**THE LE VOLOS**  
KINOGRAMS  
**BESSY CLIFFORD**  
FEATURE EXTRAORDINARY  
**LAURIE & BRONSON ALEEN**  
The First-Size Pair, in "Let 'Er Go"

### AMUSEMENTS

#### NEW YORK'S LEADING THEATRES AND SUCCESSES

**NEW AMSTERDAM**  
POP. MATS. WED. & SAT.  
EXTRA MATINEE  
FRIDAY, JULY 4  
NO SEAT OVER \$2  
**THE SUPREME**  
ACHIEVEMENT OF THE  
AMERICAN THEATRE  
**ZIEGFELD FOLLIES**  
Produced by FLORENCE TEMPEST  
ANATIONAL INSTITUTION

**COHAN & HARRIS THEATRE**  
Eves 8:15 Matinee Wed & Sat 2:15  
BIGGEST SUCCESS  
SINCE THE  
"MERRY WIDOW"  
**THE ROYAL**  
**VAGABOND**  
A COHANIZED  
OPERA COMIQUE

Holiday Mat. Friday, July 4.  
**LAURENCE**  
GAYETY THEATRE  
By & 48 St. Tel. 210 Bryant. Eves 8:30  
Matinee Wednesday and Sat. 2:30.  
Smith-Golden Successes

NEXT 2 BEST SHOWS IN TOWN ON  
THIS COLORED NEW AMSTERDAM BOPE  
**ZIEGFELD 3 O'CLOCK REVUE & MIDNIGHT FROLIC**

**HENRY MILLER'S Theatre**  
Eves 8:15 Mats. Thurs & Sat 2:15  
"RIOT-Times 'FUN-Sun"

The New  
Musical  
Farce  
Success  
**LA LA LUCILLE**  
Book by Ned Jackson  
"A Comic Upstart—American"  
The Fetchingest Chorus in Town  
"The Oodle Um Bum Bo"  
The Song that Stopped the Show

**KNICKERBOCKER** B'way 349  
Eves 8:15 Mats. Wed. & Sat. 2:15  
KLAU & ERLANGER...Managers  
**7TH BIG**  
MONTH  
COOLED BY  
ICED AIR  
JOHN CORT'S NEWEST, BIGGEST  
AND BEST MUSICAL COMEDY  
**LISTEN LESTER**  
By Harry L. Corl & George E. Stoddard  
Music by Harry Urio  
with The Daintiest Dancing  
Chorus Ever Seen on Broadway.

**LIBERTY**  
Eves 8:15 Mats. Wed. & Sat. 2:15  
EXTRA MATINEE JULY 4  
Has a Kick in It  
"The Oodle Um Bum Bo"  
2nd BIG MONTH  
**GEORGE WHITE'S**  
SCANDALS  
OF 1919  
with ANN PENNINGTON  
25 others and  
50 BEAUTIFUL SCANDAL MONSTERS  
"She Leads the Way  
among Broadway's  
Summer Music Shows"  
CHARLES DILLINGHAM'S  
MERRY HIT  
**SHE'S A**  
**GOOD FELLOW**

## New Plays This Week

**TUESDAY**—At the Forty-fourth Street Theatre Messrs. Lee and J. J. Shubert will present the "Shubert Galettes of 1919," a revue which they plan to renew annually. The piece is in two acts and twenty-eight scenes. The dialogue is by Edgar Smith, the lyrics are by Alfred Bryan and the music is by Jean Schwartz. There are additional songs by Blanche Merrill. The production has been staged under the personal direction of J. J. Shubert. The cast, which numbers over 125 persons, includes Ed Wynn, George Hassell, William Kent, Stewart Baird, Marjorie Gatenon, Marguerite Farrell, Lottie Horner, Julia Ballow, Frank Kingdom, Harry Fender, Gladys Watson, Josie Heather, Bobbie Heather, Ted Lorraine, Freda Leonard, Katherine Hart, Kuy Kendall, Ina Williams, James Fox and Gus Minton.